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ABSTRACT

This manual was developed to help parents understand some of the role conflicts present in their children's lives and to provide basic information on promoting better sex equity in schools. An introduction is followed by sections on relevant legislation, parents' status in their children's schools, ways of promoting better sex equity in schools, and home environments that promote sex equity. The discussion of legislation outlines the major provisions of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and exceptions to it. The following topics are covered in the section on the status of equity in schools: teacher language and parent tips, course selection and parent tips, teaching materials, classroom activities, and tests used with children. Examined next are eight suggested actions for promoting better sex equity in schools. The following topics are discussed in the section on creating a home environment free of sex bias: traditional parents and boys, traditional parents and girls, nontraditional parenting and promotion of androgyny and improved sex equity modeling in the home. Contains 12 selected references and resources. (MN)

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Equity Report 105

CE 063 803

**Parent's Guide
to Bias-Free Career Planning:
Helping Students to Create Options**

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1993

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FOREWORD

As parents, we still provide the most powerful influence to our children, through what we say and don't say, what we do and don't do, in direct and indirect ways in the home and in other settings. As it should be, our children have learned to focus on our behaviors as early indicators as to what is correct, permissible, and acceptable responses to events in their lives.

While appropriate, this is an awesome role we assumed through parenting, but it provides us the opportunity to see that our sons and daughters become all that they can be. We help shape their interests, values, and attitudes that will stay with them for life. One problem we have is the availability of numerous external influences that are hard to control. Their friends, teachers, counselors, work supervisors, and mentors combined spend more time with our children than we do. Television, radio, movies, and magazines surround them with mixed signals that must be put into perspective for them.

This manual was developed to help you understand some of the role conflicts that are present in our children's lives, and provides tips on how to better influence their dreams, plans, and the way they see themselves in a positive view. We hope the manual is helpful, and if so, share it with a friend.

- Harry N. Drier

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Parents and Sex Equity

I. Introduction

Expectations of how boys and girls should behave are less rigid now than they used to be. Ingrained into the American society of the past was a traditional perception of boys' and girls' sex roles assigned on the basis of gender. These roles demanded different conduct, different treatment and different lives for each. There were also barriers to equality in education which prohibited optimal growth and performance of both boys and girls.

In order to develop a clear sense of identity, boys and girls must be offered equal participation in our schools. Equal participation insures that the physical and emotional needs of each are met and that the differential treatment of boys and girls is reduced. Equal access, opportunity, and status insures that both genders have the same chances of success and that one is not of lesser value than the other. Hopefully, then, boys and girls will be able to develop similar and sufficient skills, self-concepts, dreams, competencies and expectations to keep their options open and to plan for a complete, productive, satisfying, and participating life as adults.

As parents, we are in the unique position of being able to influence both the educational opportunities provided by the public schools and the home environment of our children. Although federal legislation guarantees that there will be no educational discrimination, we are still concerned that each child be afforded the means of developing to his/her full potential. Through our consistent efforts, we are able to insure the equitable, unbiased treatment of our children in the home as well as the school.

II. Know the Law and How It Can Help You

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and its federal regulations helps schools focus on the expanded rights of women and men, and renders our schools a more successful place for our children. As a result of this legislation as an example, girls cannot be barred from any school program. Specifically, Section 901 (a) of Title IX provides the assurance that:

No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance

You should also know that your schools, which probably receives these federal funds, cannot do the following:

1. Exclude your child no matter what sex from participation in any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other educational program or activity.
2. Subject your child separate or different rules of discipline, sanctions, or other treatment for any reason.
3. Apply different rules of appearance to any of your children (for example, requiring males to wear their hair shorter than females).
4. Aid or perpetuate discrimination against any person by providing significant assistance to any agency, organization, or person which discriminates on the basis of sex in providing any aid, benefit, or service to any of your children.
5. Assign your child, if pregnant, to separate classes or activities, although your school may require them to obtain a physician's certificate as to her ability to participate in the normal educational program or activity so long as such a certificate is required of all students for other physical or emotional conditions requiring the attention of a physician.
6. Refuse to excuse any absence because of pregnancy or refuse to allow your child to return to the same grade level which she held when she left school because of pregnancy.
7. Discriminate against any person on the basis of sex in the counseling or guidance of students or the use of different tests or materials for counseling unless such different materials cover the

same occupation and interest areas and the use of such different materials is shown to be essential to eliminate sex bias.

Exceptions to Title IX

No law is perfect and this holds true of Title IX. The following are the exceptions to Title IX. In other words, your school may:

1. Conduct, in separate sessions for males and females, portions of classes in your elementary and secondary schools which deal exclusively with human sexuality.
2. Make requirements based on vocal range or quality which may result in a chorus or choruses of predominantly one sex.
3. Provide separate toilet, locker rooms, and shower facilities on the basis of sex, but such facilities provided for students of one sex shall be comparable to such facilities provided for students of the other sex.
4. Separate students on the basis of sex within physical education classes during participation in sports, the purpose of major activity of which involves bodily contact. (Wrestling, boxing, rugby, ice hockey, football, and basketball are used as examples in the regulation.)
5. Group students in physical educational classes according to ability assessed by objective standards developed and applied without regard to sex.
6. Operate separate athletic teams for:
 - a. Sports primarily involving body contact.
 - b. Team sports in which members are chosen on the basis of competitive skill.

The school, however, must allow members of both sexes to try out for a non-contact sport if there is only one team and members of one sex have been limited from participation on it in the past.

Your school principal has copies of these regulations and is the expert on the use of these regulations in your particular school. Know your rights and those of your children. Make an appointment with the building principal to discuss any questions you might have about these rights.

III. What is the Status in Your School?

Despite Title IX, there still might exist differences in the treatment of your female and male children in their schools. Schools directly, or indirectly, can foster stereotyped views of gender roles. The differences that exist in the classroom are unmistakable by the informed observer. That is, teachers and counselors have definite stereotypes about their male and female pupils and these stereotypes may direct the language the teacher or counselor uses and the way they interact with each student. In addition, course selection advice and procedures, teaching materials, classroom activities, and tests may also reflect some degree of gender or sex bias. The following are but a few examples of issues and helpful tips for your use around each issue:

A. Teacher Language

The language your teachers and counselors use when communicating with your children can reinforce sex bias, directly or indirectly. Teachers and counselors may continue to use "he" when referring to both males and females. Students do not always understand that they are using "he" in reference to both genders. Referring to students as "ladies and gentlemen" also calls attention to students' sex.

Boys and Teacher Interaction

Teachers tend to favor boys and spend more time with them than the girls and interact with them more often and give them more attention. "Good" boys are described as active, adventurous, aggressive, assertive, curious,

energetic, enterprising, frank, independent, and inventive. Boys usually receive more responses to requests, more detailed instruction, more praise and hugging, and more verbal and nonverbal criticism than girls. Boys are also more likely to speak out in class and be asked more high-order questions and to dominate class discussions. Male students are rewarded for getting things right and criticized for poor work. They are also more likely, through toys, hobbies, television programs and museum visits to have more opportunities to learn science.

Girls and Teacher Interaction

Did you know that while girls may receive more teacher approval, they receive less teacher attention because they are less likely to misbehave, assert themselves or appear to need the help? "Good" girls are depicted as appreciative, calm, conscientious, considerate, cooperative, mannerly, poised, sensitive, dependable, efficient, mature, obliging, and thorough. Teachers interact with girls generally when they are physically near the teacher. Girls are rewarded for neatness and criticized for being assertive.

Female students receive fewer opportunities to respond, receive less praise and criticism, encouragement and individual help, are less frequently involved in joking and conversation, and receive less instruction on how to do things for themselves. Even the brightest girls may be untalkative because when they do take part, they are frequently interrupted by the teacher as well as male classmates. When girls do speak out in class, they are frequently told by their teacher to raise their hand before talking in class. This is not always true for boys.

Girls who are identified as gifted are less likely to participate in special or accelerated programs. Female students are asked fewer abstract and complex questions. They also are provided fewer opportunities to use equipment, perform experiments, and carry out demonstrations. Girls with learning difficulties are less likely to be identified or to participate in special education programs than those boys who are learning disabled.

Parent Tips

As parents, you can do several things to reduce sexist language in the classroom and to promote more positive teacher interaction for both boys and girls by:

1. Observing teacher-student interaction that may create barriers in classroom communication and contribute to biased teaching practices.
2. Encouraging girls to be assertive in the classroom and express their opinions.
3. Relating your concerns to the teacher and/or building administrator.

B. Course Selection

There could also exist differences in the course selections offered your children. There seem to be "boy's subjects" and "girl's subjects" and school counselors may discourage boys or girls from participating in nontraditional fields. For example, girls are often encouraged to study languages, social sciences, or pharmacy rather than engineering or medicine. Unfortunately, fewer females are involved in the new technology courses such as science, math, and computers. Fewer girls are enrolled in these classes and it is not uncommon for young women to have less positive attitudes toward science. In fact, some mathematics and science classrooms may be unfriendly, even hostile environments for young women. One reason for this may be that there is a lack of female role models particularly in science and technology.

Parent Tips

You can increase course selection opportunities by:

1. Urging the active recruitment of females and males to enroll in nontraditional fields.
2. Inquiring into the male/female ratio in courses such as science, mathematics, computers and technology.
3. Stressing that both male and female teachers be available at all levels and in all subjects. For instance, female teachers in math, science, shop, agriculture, and coaching as well as males in lower elementary, art, music, literature, and commercial subjects.

C. Teaching Materials

Your school textbooks, films, television, and other materials used in the classroom also contribute to sexist outlooks and promote the more traditional stereotypes of boys and girls. Some present males as independent heroes and active leaders. At the same time, females are presented as being submissive, dependent, and followers who are less competent in their social and occupational roles.

Women authors, women's issues, and photographs of women are less visible and even omitted from many texts. While there are exceptions, when they are included, women are often pictured in situations such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, dancing, and working in "female" jobs such as sales, teaching, or nursing. These same women are featured as preferring humanities, artistic, cultural, or literary areas more often than technology.

The use of male characters, on the other hand, are often predominant and more space is allocated to males than females. Males are usually seen in outdoor activities such as mowing the lawn, washing the car, or working in "male" occupations such as construction or firefighting. These males seem to choose team sports, fishing, and hunting.

Parent Tips

You can insure that teaching materials are more equitable by:

1. Visually examining textbooks and instructional materials for sex stereotypes and sexist language and photographs.
2. Insisting that teachers develop nonbiased media-resources such as games, bulletin boards, posters, and illustrations.
3. Demanding that curriculum include knowledge about females, their interests, and their needs.
4. Requiring equal access to money and materials for boys' and girls' extracurricular activities.
5. Urging counselors to motivate girls toward higher aspirations and expanded career options and to provide inventories and occupational materials that are not sex biased.

D. Classroom Activities

Your child could be guided into sex-typed classroom activities. Young girls may be encouraged to play in the "kitchen" center with dolls - traditional female activities - while boys could be directed into activities involving blocks, climbing, construction, and selling. Unfortunately, your daughters may participate in fewer classroom experiences with common experimental materials and instruments and have fewer classroom and extracurricular science activities than males. Male students are often asked to help with the heavy work like moving furniture while female students are asked to hand out papers or perform other secretarial chores.

Parent Tips

Parents can make sure classroom activities do not discriminate between boys and girls by:

1. Insisting that teachers integrate nonsexist activities into the curriculum.
2. Requiring that children not be separated by sex during recess or physical education.

E. Tests Used With Your Children

When selecting tests, school districts usually include sex and race equity as a criteria for selection. Although sex bias in standardized tests has decreased over the years, teacher-made tests may still reflect sex bias.

Parent Tips

Parents can reduce the incidences of inequitable tests by:

1. Reviewing standardized tests for sex bias.
2. Examining teacher-made tests for sex bias.

IV. How Can You Promote Better Sex Equity in Your School?

You are encouraged to take a more active role in promoting sex equity in your school for your sons and/or daughters. When involved you can contribute to equal opportunity and classroom environments where gender differences are not present. Through your participation in local school district activities, you can encourage school personnel to remove barriers that encourage sex bias at all levels of teaching and learning.

It is important that your district is aware of and adheres to Title IX and other anti-discrimination laws which promote participation of females in academic and athletic pursuits and males to choose nontraditional courses and career paths. You can insure improved equal opportunity and nonsexist educational practices by:

Suggested Actions

1. Requesting that inservice training focus upon helping faculty and staff avoid sex discrimination and stereotyping and perceive the importance of educational equity.
2. Identifying inequities that exist in district policies, practices, and promotional materials.
3. Emphasizing that there needs to be a more impartial balance between males and females in counseling, administrative positions and other personnel such as bus drivers and custodians.
4. Encouraging the schools to provide more services such as day care, continuing education programs, and counseling to address the special needs of female students.

5. Having discussions with your children about sexist language.
6. Volunteering as a "room father" to take a more active part in classroom activities.
7. Using "he" when you mean male, "she" when you mean female, and "he or she" when you are referring to both.
8. Insisting upon a classroom climate which is warm and accepting and promotes a sense of independence, autonomy, positive self-concept, and critical learning opportunities for all students.

V. What About Your Home Environment?

Just as there exist differences in the way boys and girls are treated in school, there may be differences in the way you treat your children at home. You can, by your actions, examples, and expectations, unknowingly affect your children's sex-role development. That is, you can reinforce attitudes of sex bias by the way you interact with your children in your home environment.

From the very beginning, you may talk to, hold, and play differently with a son or daughter. Further differences may occur in the way you dress each, the toys they play with, and their overall personality characteristics.

A. Traditional Parents and Boys

While this may not be true of you, traditional parents prefer boys to be "handsome" and "masculine". They generally see male infants as being less fragile than female infants. For this reason, we often play more roughly

with the boys and place fewer restrictions on them as they begin to walk, climb, and be more physically active. We may pay more attention to our boys than to our girls and we as fathers, especially, play more with our sons than with our daughters. Boys, however, receive more punishment than girls from many parents.

An important difference between males and females can be observed also in the way we dress them. Boys are dressed in blue, green, or brown and usually wear pants in an effort to make identification as a male easier.

Boys are more likely to play with trucks and blocks and receive more baseballs, footballs, and tools. Fearing that boys may be "sissy", some parents may encourage their male children to avoid female interests at all costs. That is, boys who play with traditional boys' toys receive approval, but should they want to play with traditional girls' toys (such as dolls) they receive disapproval. Therefore, many children will not play with toys associated with the other gender.

Often we as parents place emphasis on our male children being self-confident, and aggressive. Because we grant boys more independence and freedom, we allow our boys to be away from home without supervision more often than our girls. Males are supposed to be powerful, tough, courageous, and "act like a man". Above all, they must not cry or show fear. We sometimes expect them to be dominating, success and career oriented, ambitious, and proud. Parents often expect boys to put forth more effort than girls.

Some parents often regard their male child as intelligent and analytical and smarter than girls. Therefore, education is considered very important and a boy is encouraged to finish school. Boys are discouraged, however, from being secretaries, beauticians, dancers, and cooks. They are urged to envision themselves as being pilots, athletes, doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers and the primary bread winner.

In the home, the male is still viewed as responsible to financially provide for his family, concern himself with his work, achieve, and make decisions. In other words, he is to be head of the family, logical, levelheaded in crises and perform those tasks traditionally associated with males. This results in

a refusal to handle a baby or do household chores because this is not viewed as "man's work."

B. Traditional Parents and Girls

Many parents expect girls to smile and laugh more and to be "cute", "pretty", feminine, and ladylike. Because girls tend to reflect this value, they are "dainty" and "graceful". Girls are then treated more gently than boys. For this reason we often overprotect and make them dependent even if this is not our conscious intent.

We often dress our girls in pink or yellow and give them dolls, dishes, and dress-up clothes. Cooking, sewing, and crafts are often supported as acceptable activities. We sometimes assume that girls are less rowdy, although it is okay for girls to be "tomboys" because they "will grow out of it." Girls are allowed to cry and be sentimental, affectionate, and romantic, and are considered more emotional.

In addition, we often reinforce the belief that our girls are impractical, timid, fearful, anxious, and act on intuition. Their patience, sensitivity, and caring equip them for working with people and helping others in such traditional roles as nurse or teacher. Girls are not generally encouraged, however, to become firemen or lawyers, which are more traditional vocations for males.

We also, without intent, expect our girls to be passive, submissive, and easily intimidated, and to conform, and to be responsible. We as parents often tend to listen less to our girls and often punish them more quickly for aggressive behaviors, and restrict them more in their activities.

Intellectually, we sometimes consider our girls to illogical and less competent than boys. This, at times, translates to their educational plans as being less important as boys they know. Less success is expected from girls in terms of types and levels of post high school education.

For traditional parents, a woman's place is "in the home." She is to devote her time and energy to being a gracious, agreeable wife and mother.

Domestic tasks involving cooking, cleaning, and mothering are the center of her world. This value needs to change and the parent is the most influential figure in affecting this needed change.

C. Are We Nontraditional Parents?

Some of us find that traditional sex roles are too restrictive and prevent boys and girls from developing to their full potential. As nontraditional parents, we promote **androgyny**, a modern concept in which an individual can identify himself/herself as a human being rather than as a male or female.

This idea combines the best qualities of traditional masculine and feminine traits and allows more flexibility in sex roles. **Androgynous** individuals are individuals who are better adjusted and share many of the same personality characteristics. In other words, boys can be sensitive and gentle and girls can be competitive and achievement-oriented without feeling less masculine or feminine. This should be our goal as parents.

D. Improved Sex Equity Modeling in the Home

As our children imitate us and other adults who are around them, we are the most important role models. It is from us that our children learn their values and behaviors regarding appropriate behavior for their sex. If we model sex-typed behavior, our children are likely to adopt stereotyped roles and behaviors as their own.

Parent Tips

We can help our children develop a positive self-concept and become fulfilled individuals by:

1. Teaching our children that boys and girls can do all the same things.
2. Sharing in the day-to-day child care such as feeding, dressing, putting children to bed, escorting them to and from school, and taking care of sick children by both mother and father.
3. Increasing your son's participation in more domestic tasks such as cooking, shopping, and cleaning.
4. Helping your children realize that they can accomplish things as human beings rather than just males and females.
5. Broadening your child's perspectives by modeling sex-role behavior that is not stereotyped.
6. Having open discussions with your children about men and women and attitudes toward success.
7. Presenting examples for your children that intentionally conflict with traditional viewpoints regarding careers and occupations.
8. Helping your children "daydream" about the future in a nontraditional setting.
9. Making your children aware of the infinite possibilities in life.
10. Reassuring your daughters that they can still be "feminine" while being assertive, composed, and analytical.
11. Emphasizing that personal relationships and domestic roles apply to both sexes.
12. Discouraging your children from describing a male or female solely on the basis of the job they do.

13. Helping your son to be tender, nurturing, gentle, and express motions.
14. Helping your daughter to be ambitious, independent, and successful.
15. Assisting both sons and daughters in preparing for home and family roles.
16. Encouraging all children to be and become all that each is capable of becoming.
17. Being an example of a well-rounded, self-actualized individual yourself.
18. Encouraging both sons and daughters to pursue all career possibilities.
19. Showing your children what broad opportunities are available to them.
20. Encouraging daughters to receive an education appropriate to their potential.
21. Capitalizing on your children's differences rather than strengthening the idea of conformity.
22. Expressing a warm and accepting feeling for sons and daughters day by day.

VI. Selected References and Resources

Adolescent Parent Resource Guide, 1989. \$75.00 in Ohio. \$78.00 outside Ohio.

This two-volume set provides a curriculum resource for the GRADS program. Modules address developing positive self esteem, pregnancy, parenting, and obtaining economic independence.

Vocational Instructional Materials Laboratory, CETE, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210, 800-848-4815 or 614-292-4353.

Being a Single Parent. (VHS Video). \$149.00.

This 19-minute video focuses on three different kinds of single parents: a divorced woman, a single woman who chose to be a single parent, and a man who raised his two sons. Parents discuss how they cope with the role of parenting, the economic effects of living on a single wage, and the psychological effects divorce has on children.

Hepworth, Eugenia. **Parents as Partners in Education, The School and Home Working Together**, second edition, 1987, pgs. 358-359, Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, OH 43215.

Houston, Barabara. "Gender Freedom and the Subletics of Sexist Education", *Educational Theory*, Vol. 35, Number 4, Fall 1985, p. 359-369.

In Their Own Voices: Young Women Talk About Dropout Out, 1988. \$6.95.

This report is based on interviews of 75 young females in the Philadelphia school system by PEER (Project on Equal Education Rights). It examines why these women dropped out of school and

disagrees with the widely held belief that schools are more sensitive toward females than males. While pregnancy and caring for other family members were reasons given for leaving school, school violence and the inability to comprehend classroom assignments were equally give.

Project on Equal Rights, 1333 H Street, NW, 11th Floor, Washington, DC 20005, 202-682-0940.

Jones, M. Gail. "Gender Issues in Teacher Education", January-February, 1989, p. 33-38.

O'Reilly and Borman, Kathryn. "Sexism and Sex Discrimination in Education", Theory into Practice, Vol. 23, Number 2.

Public Laws Enacted During the Second Session of the Ninety-Second Congress of the United States of America, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, Stock #2200-000040, Page 373. (Reference)

"The Rights and Responsibilities of Students: A Handbook for the School Community". Originally from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979, pp. 17-18.

Single Mother's Resource Handbook, Annette Ferando and David Newbert, 1982. \$6.75.

This innovative program helps single mothers develop positive self esteem, better express their needs and feelings, positively influence their children, and use proven problem-solving techniques to make better decisions. A Spanish version is available for the same price.

WEEA Publishing Center, Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Suite 200, Newton, MA 02160, 800-225-3088 or in MA, 617-969-7100.

Teen Married Couples. (VHS Video). \$149.00

This 28-minute video, adapted from a Phil Donahue program, interviews a few teen married couples to see how their relationship is progressing. Parents of the teen couples are also interviewed to get their opinions.

Films for the Humanities & Sciences, PO Box 2053, Princeton, NJ 08543-2053, Fax 609-452-1602 or 800-257-5126.

Teen Pregnancy and Parenting. Annette U. Rickel, 1989. \$32.00

Topics include teen sexuality, teen contraceptive behaviors, stress and social support, child abuse and maltreating parents, sex education, family planning clinics, and case studies.

Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1900 Frost Road, Suite 101, Bristol, PA 19027-1598, 800-821-8312.

Equity and Guidance Series

The following are short descriptions of ten new publications produced to promote opening all options for youth during their career decision-making and life-planning activities. The series attempts to provide a consistent and straight-forward message and helpful activities for all involved in the process.

Order # & Price	Title	Description
D101 \$10.00	Equity, Bias, & Stereotyping Reduction-A Literature Review (70 pages)	This review represents staff reviewing over 1,200 research, effective practice, publications, curriculum, staff training efforts, etc. and selecting over 400 abstracts around 12 different categories under one cover.
D102 \$12.00	Funding Resource Directory-Foundations, Corporations, and Organizations (100 pages) (National and Texas)	This new directory is one of the most compact, targeted, and the most affordable document available nationally. Staff searched numerous very expensive existing resource guides, and have now indexed and described the best groups for funding.
D103 \$7.00	Equity Resource Materials Guide	Staff reviewed over 900 national curriculum, guidance, software, VCR and other visuals and documents that are current, available, and affordable. The 500 product descriptors are again organized by student age and priority equity issues.
E201 \$3.00 single	Mentors Guide to Improved Equity in Student Decision Making	A targeted set of suggested methods for adult mentors to better assure that they keep all options open to students during advisement (30 pages)
E202 \$3.00 single	Counselors and Bias-Free Career Planning Program	A guide for counselors that suggest a variety of methods to use with students, parents, and staff to assure all career planning advice is bias free (30 pages)

Order # & Price	Title	Description
E203 \$3.00 single	Teachers Guide to Student Bias-Free Career Planning	A source book of suggested methods and resources for assuring that classroom career planning activities and advice open and not close options for students (30 pages)
E204 \$3.00 single	Administrators Guide to Bias-Free Classrooms	A desk-top guide for school administrators to help guide and monitor guidance and instruction towards a biased-free environment (40 pages)
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